

**Statement by
General John A. Gordon, USAF
Before the Senate Armed Services Committee
Confirmation Hearing on the Selection of
Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security
and Administrator of the
National Nuclear Security Administration**

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before the Committee to discuss my qualifications to become the first Administrator of the new National Nuclear Security Administration. And Mr. Chairman, I thank you for moving so expeditiously in arranging this hearing.

I also thank Senator Domenici for his very kind introduction. I am very grateful for his support of my candidacy and for the leadership and support he gives this entire endeavor.

I am also grateful to the President and Secretary Richardson for their confidence and the opportunity to be considered for this position.

I would like to introduce to the Committee once again the person to whom I owe so much for the opportunity to serve this nation for 32 years, and for her willingness to let me try one more time - my wife of 33 years, Marilyn.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have had more than a few friends question why I would be willing to undertake this job. They seem to think the problems too vexing, the bureaucracy too cumbersome, and the political support too weak for a mission that is fading and too draining of resources needed for higher priorities. While there may be basis for skepticism and there are tremendous problems with which we must come to grips, I do not agree that these are reasons to turn away from the task.

First, I believe in the need for such an organization and in the importance of the assigned missions. I congratulate the Committee and the many members of Congress who made NNSA a reality. The Committee knows the breadth of the mission - you did much to define it. I want you to know that I accept and support every element of the mission statement:

- to enhance security through the military application of nuclear energy
- to maintain and enhance the safety, reliability and performance of the stockpile
- to provide the Navy with effective nuclear power plants
- to promote international nuclear safety and nonproliferation
- to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction, and
- to support US leadership in science and technology.

Each of these is important in its own right. Bringing them together offers synergism, commonality of purpose and effort, and a sharp focus on mission. The new organization creates an opportunity to develop coordinated programs, common policies, and much strengthened budgeting and program execution. It matches responsibilities with the authorities.

Importantly, perhaps most importantly, it creates a full-time senior advocate for these goals, for the resources, and for the people who actually accomplish the goals. The new organization will be a visible and important demonstration of the commitment the government makes to these missions and to the people.

Second, I recognize this as a major challenge, one that, Senate willing, I am eager to take on. There will be leadership, management, and resource challenges. There will be supporters and detractors. Whatever comes, the first Administrator will have a most interesting experience.

Third, I believe this will prove to be one of the best technological management jobs in the nation – and therefore an exciting opportunity to do important work, interesting work, and to make a real contribution.

Fourth, I have a great attachment to the elements of the new organization and considerable affection for the people who now make up the NNSA. I have worked with many of them over the years and have great respect for all they have accomplished, and for the professionalism and the dedication they demonstrate every day. I would be proud to lead and work with them as we continue to reconfigure the nuclear security enterprise in America and increase the safety and security of the Russian nuclear establishment.

Finally, I do not accept the contention that there is little chance of success. I see just the opposite; the conditions are right for success. I do not underestimate the magnitude of the challenge the new Administration will face, but there is broad support for leadership and for positive change. The lab directors support the establishment of NNSA. The plant managers want someone to make needed decisions on investment. DOD leaders seek to rebuild and strengthen the relationship with DOE. Dealing with Russia is always difficult, but the progress made has built the foundation for more rapid and quantifiable progress to reduce the threat and improve security and safety in their weapons and power sectors. And, perhaps the most important sign is that the employees of the enterprise – at Headquarters, at field offices,

at the labs and plants and other facilities –are skilled, talented, proud and dedicated. They need only focused leadership with a constancy of direction and commitment to what they do and what they stand for.

I believe much the same conditions apply on the Hill. From discussions with Members and staff, I know that there are many here who want exactly the same thing –someone who will step up to the hard decisions and set a course for NNSA that is clear and dynamic. I hope to do that, knowing I will need to rely heavily on the Members of this Committee and many others in Congress for support.

Qualifications

Mr. Chairman, I will not spend much time presenting my qualifications for this position, but I would comment that most of what I have done in my professional career has helped prepare me for this challenge. I have run large organizations, and helped set their long-range goals and visions. I have worked closely with numerous people and organizations that are now in the NNSA. I have hands-on R&D experience in and close relationships with the nuclear laboratories and the production plants. I have helped design and test weapons and was an experimenter in underground nuclear tests. I think I have visited, at one time or another, every Defense Programs' facility and worked closely with many of them. I have commanded a nuclear unit, been deeply involved in arms control and nonproliferation, and served in the State Department and the National Security Council.

In the NSC, I helped establish the non-proliferation function, worked with the early cooperative threat reduction programs and the program to convert Russian weapons-grade uranium to reactor fuel. My experience with the Russians on a variety of arms control efforts adds to my qualifications, as do my current responsibilities in nonproliferation and, I would suggest, the totality of my experience as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

And, finally, while hardly an expert, I am not inexperienced with the strategic submarine business, and have had numerous interactions with them over the years.

Initial Observations

That said, I know I have a great deal to learn. But, as you would expect, I have some initial observations. I offer these initial thoughts knowing that when I more fully understand the issues and the organization more completely, my views may evolve.

The threat environment is dramatically different than during the Cold War. The Russian threat has changed qualitatively and quantitatively, but it is not gone. New

nuclear states are appearing; proliferation and terrorism are real. Yet our nuclear security enterprise has not adapted fully. We struggle to maintain our stockpile in a situation where

- no new US nuclear weapons are being designed,
- no US nuclear test are being conducted,
- funding is very tight, and,
- public support for the mission is not broad-based.

In this environment

- We have lost energy and cohesion.
- We do not fully understand our priorities or the requirements we are trying to meet.
- We are not attracting the talent we require for continued success and we are not retaining the talent we need for the difficult task of stockpile stewardship.
- The infrastructure is aging, and, in some cases failing. This itself sends a signal to our people about our commitment to the mission and to them. It also calls into question our ability to conduct our mission, especially our ability to surge to meet an unforeseen problem.
- The enterprise is certainly less efficient than it should be. It has not fully adopted modern business practices.
- We do not enjoy full confidence of Congress, our partners, or our own people.

For these and other reasons, there is now a lack of confidence in the enterprise's ability to manage itself and to accomplish assigned missions, especially into a dynamic future.

Key Task Ahead for NNSA

To me, much of what needs to be done can be encompassed by a relatively simple statement – one that is much easier to say than to do: to restore trust and confidence in the management and leadership of the nuclear security enterprise in this country:

- by the Congress,
- by the partners, and
- by the people who do the work of the enterprise.

In effect, if confirmed, I need to gain your permission, maybe it's better to say your trust, to actually run this enterprise. I need to rebuild the trust between the enterprise and the Congress. I need to rebuild the relationship, trust, and transparency with the military and the Department of Defense. And I need to restore the full trust and confidence of those who do the work.

It's hard to envisage a metric for this goal, but one measure of success might be a significant reduction in the number of reports required by the Congress and the number of special studies and panels we feel a need to empanel to oversee our work. Without in any way minimizing the absolute need for Congressional oversight and the need for the unique insight offered by outside experts, it seems to me that we have carried this to the extreme.

I recognize that this degree of attention is largely of the enterprise's own making, the result of problems Congress and others have identified. But today we are putting too much energy into continual self-examinations, numerous review and advisory panels, and many detailed reports to Congress. If we can rebuild trust and confidence, we can spend more of our human resources on the mission itself.

Specific Tasks

Mr. Chairman, beyond the key point of restoring trust and confidence, there are several issues I would want to take on as quickly as possible. Again, speaking in broad terms, these include:

- Quickly gain broad agreement, initially within the enterprise itself, on our mission, our vision, our goals, and our view of who we are and how we operate. I would hope that all operate from a common understanding of what we are about and what we are trying to do.
- Bring the NNSA organization to a sound management, leadership and fiscal footing.
- Sharpen the efficiency of the enterprise.
- Strengthen construction project management within DP and NN. There are lessons to be learned from Admiral Bowman's operation with Naval Reactors.
- I need to come to my own conclusions about the stockpile stewardship program. Are we balanced properly across the program? Are we on the right track for pit and tritium production? Are we under invested in facilities? –I am rather certain of that answer, by the way.
- And I would like to ensure we are operating to an agreed and understandable set of requirements with DOD.

There seems to be a difference of views on whether we are in balance between needed near-term stockpile work and the longer-range development of the tools and techniques that will ensure the future of the stockpile. So far, I am firmly in both camps. We must find the right balance. We cannot let current systems atrophy or fail to do necessary maintenance programs. We cannot fail to be ready for the long-term issues we face, notably tritium and pit production. And we cannot remain static in pushing for a deeper understanding of the underlying physics, chemistry, and engineering so that we can ensure a safe, secure and reliable stockpile so long as America requires nuclear weapons.

In the area of non-proliferation, I would hope to secure the gains made thus far, and accelerate the progress being made in reactor safety and weapons security. Here too I will need to reach my own conclusions on how much progress is possible and whether we are invested right – whether we are making good progress toward our goals, and how solid is the cooperation on the other side. The goals of the program are good. The questions are how much progress we are making and at what price.

Concluding Comments

Mr. Chairman, I do not underestimate the difficulty of the task, if confirmed.

But the conditions may well be right to give us a chance at rebuilding the nuclear security enterprise of the US and invigorating its pride and energy. Congressional support is strong. Leaders within the enterprise realize that it is time to pull together to attack the problems they face – problems that if left unsolved will put this country at a real disadvantage. Failure in this endeavor simply is not acceptable.

I'll share one more observation that gives me great hope – that is the superb quality of the people, federal employees and contractors, who make up the NNSA. The very greatest majority are hugely talented and strongly committed. They want to succeed. They want to help maintain the security of our nation. They want to be proud of what they do and they want to be appreciated. They want our trust and confidence and we must keep faith with them. We must give them clear statements of mission and priorities. We must provide them the resources to do what we ask of them. We owe them leadership and we owe them support. With that, they will deliver.

Mr. Chairman, I welcome the challenges presented by the new position. If confirmed I will give it my very best, and commit myself firmly to the mission and to the people of NNSA.

I would be pleased to answer questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.